

Post-Event Summary Report

Name of Event: White House Conference on Aging Forum

Date of Event: March 21, 2005

Location of Event: Sun City Hilton Head, Pinckney Hall, Bluffton, South Carolina

Number of Persons attending: 34; 2 under age 55; 1 “boomer”

Sponsoring Organization(s): Lowcountry Area Agency on Aging

Contact Name: Marvile Thompson, Nancy Guerry

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Priority Issue #1: Healthcare: cost of healthcare premiums and pharmaceutical costs; access and affordability of services; need to encourage/enhance healthy lifestyles and disease prevention

Barriers:

1. Prescription drugs costs too high even with new drug card due to high deductible and other limitations
2. Medicaid waiver and/or guidelines do not safeguard middle income seniors' assets
3. Medical expenses continue to rise, in part due to high cost of malpractice insurance
4. Excessive incidental charges by hospitals too high, running up billing to insurance companies and consumers
5. Spend down rules exhaust retirees' assets before help from Medicaid
6. Corporations are cutting medical benefits for retirees
7. Drug costs are elevated due in part to advertising costs
8. Caregivers of elderly parents are not protected with parental leave law
9. Medical billings are too complicated and confusing for seniors
10. Shortage of Geriatricians prevents adequate health care in rural areas

Proposed Solution(s):

1. Outlaw drug advertising in media; and require pharmaceutical companies to pass savings on to consumers; have FCC monitor to ensure compliance
2. Review and increase Medicaid eligibility requirements to better reflect cost of living to serve more seniors
3. Place profit ceiling on medical providers and pharmaceutical companies
4. Have more aggressive monitoring of billing practices of medical providers
5. Review spend down rules to reflect more accurate cost of living for seniors
6. Stop subsidizing tobacco farmers and use the savings to increase funding for senior services

7. Implement Parental Leave Act as part of Older Americans Act to protect caregivers who are caring for frail and elderly senior parents
8. Provide financial support and tax breaks for caregivers of Seniors
9. Encourage more geriatric practices in rural areas with tax incentives and student loan waivers
10. Fund more aggressive training for physicians and their staff to help seniors access services and information on diseases
11. Provide more readily available assistance to seniors with medical billing confusion
12. Provide Tort controls to limit malpractice liability; limit cost of malpractice insurance

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Priority Issue #2: Long-term Care; Continuum of Care: Balance institutional care with home and community-based care based on choice; home and community based care following hospital stays

Barriers:

1. Consumer has no choice in how funds are spent for long term care or nursing home care
2. Not enough nursing home beds, nor residential hospice care beds
3. Caregivers do not receive enough assistance when they choose to keep their frail senior family member at home rather than in a nursing home
4. Family members and senior patients not fully informed of their options, nor properly trained in caring for the ill loved one prior to hospital discharge
5. Home health care beyond most budgets of middle income seniors, yet this is the preferred means of caring for them

Solutions:

1. Implement SC Choice throughout South Carolina to assist family in caring for loved ones at home; make available to low and middle income seniors
2. Review and revise regulations of number of beds in a regions for nursing home level of care and for residential hospice care; especially rural areas
3. Assist caregivers financially when they have to quit a job to care for elderly parents so that they can care for their parents at home rather than in a nursing home if that is their choice
4. Provide more aggressive training to medical professionals on services available to seniors as well as require proper training for care by family members before discharge from hospitals

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Priority Issue #3: Senior Friendly Communities: transportation; changing attitudes toward aging; construction of senior homes for aging in place; one stop shops;

Barriers:

1. Lack of transportation services in rural areas restricts mobility of seniors after they stop driving; limiting access to services and socialization
2. Senior population is changing and general population needs to be educated to more active lifestyles of today's and tomorrow's seniors
3. Not enough affordable, senior-friendly housing and activities available to middle income seniors
4. Difficulty in accessing services/learning about available services for seniors

Solutions:

1. Form partnerships with faith-based community to provide transportation vans; government supply the mini-vans and faith-based community provide volunteer drivers
2. Contract with local taxi services to allow seniors to purchase coupon books at reduced rate for transportation to doctor appointments, shopping, etc. Government could subsidize the coupons to offset revenue loss by taxi services; should be available to all seniors
3. Uniform Building Code needs to be revised to address mobility issues of seniors and implement requirements to standardize housing to allow aging in place for seniors
4. Provide tax incentives for home building industry to build handicap-friendly homes
5. Promote more physical activities for senior center communities to better promote socialization and healthy lifestyles for seniors